

Offadd: DHHS, Office of the Secretary, Office of Acquisition Management, Room 443H, 200 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20201.

Subject: Abstinence Education Evaluation.

Desc: The following is a request for comment. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) plans to issue an RFP for the evaluation of the abstinence education provisions (Section 912) of P.L. 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. (This program is also known as section 510 of Title V of the Social Security Act.) This formula grant program is operated by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). It provides \$50 million per year to “enable State[s] to provide abstinence education, and at the option of the State, where appropriate mentoring, counseling, and adult supervision to promote abstinence from sexual activity, with a focus on those groups which are most likely to bear children out of wedlock.” P.L. 105-33, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, section 5001, sets aside funding for “use by the Secretary to evaluate programs under section 510, directly or through grants, contracts or interagency agreements.”

ASPE intends to conduct this evaluation through a contract. The RFP will be issued in April 1998. To proceed effectively with this effort, comment is solicited on the planned direction for this solicitation. A synopsis of the approach ASPE intends to take is presented below. This synopsis is for information and planning purposes only and does not constitute a Request for Proposals.

ASPE believes feedback from the evaluation and program communities is important. In providing an opportunity for comment, ASPE hopes to identify potential problem areas and receive recommendations that will enhance the success of the solicitation. Comments should be viewed as an opportunity to improve the eventual solicitation package.

ASPE intends to approach this evaluation in the following manner and seeks comments as to the benefits and drawbacks of this approach.

- (1) This evaluation will focus on a small number (four to eight) of particularly interesting, clearly articulated, fully-implemented models, selected by ASPE with the assistance of the evaluator.
- (2) The evaluator will gather information on programs and assist ASPE in selecting the programs to be evaluated. The programs selected for evaluation will include approaches reflecting the range of programs funded under the section 510 grant program. To the extent feasible given funding and timing constraints, the evaluation will focus on models that are being used in more than one state.
- (3) Rigorous evaluation methods will be required, including either experimental or quasi-experimental methods.
- (4) Outcomes of interest must include--but need not be limited to--the four performance measures identified by MCHB in their program guidance. These four performance measures include the

rate of pregnancy to teenagers aged 15 to 17; the proportion of adolescents aged 17 years and younger who engage in sexual intercourse; the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among youths aged 15 to 19; and the rate of births to teenagers aged 15 to 17. The evaluation will pay particular attention to decreasing the proportions of individuals under the age of 18 who have experienced sexual intercourse and will also include other outcomes identified by the states and programs that are ultimately selected to participate in the evaluation. Though changes in attitudes and knowledge may be explored, the evaluation will focus on the effects of programs on behavior. (5) The evaluator will be required to document the activities undertaken by the program, as well as, to the extent possible, other influences on the subjects of the study. (6) Data will be collected from program staff and program participants. Data collection from program participants will occur pre-treatment, post-treatment, and at least one year after the end of treatment, for both treatment and control/comparison groups.

Eligibility to participate in any future acquisition does not depend on a response to this notice. Replies to this request for comments will be separate from, and will have no bearing on, evaluation of competitors' proposals submitted in response to any Request for Proposals. Comments received may or may not be used to complete a final statement of work. Comments will not be critiqued. The government does not intend to pay for the information solicited and will not recognize any costs associated with this initiative. Proprietary information is not being solicited and information considered proprietary should be identified as such. Comments will be accepted only in writing and only by mail. They should be mailed to Cheryl Howe at the above address by January 15, 1998. No telephone, fax, or e-mail responses will be accepted. No collect calls will be accepted.